

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief John Batiste



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*****For Immediate Release*****

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Trooper's Patrol Car Catches Fire After Being Struck From Behind

On August 9, 2005 at 1655, a Trooper was parked on the left shoulder of southbound I-405 just south of NE 6th. The Trooper had a subject in custody in the backseat of the patrol car. A 1991 Lincoln Town Car, traveling southbound, drifted onto the left shoulder and struck the rear of the Trooper's patrol car while the Trooper and subject in custody were sitting inside. The impact pushed the patrol car back out into the mainline traffic, blocking the HOV lane and lane 3. The patrol car's trunk caught on fire. The Trooper safely removed the subject from the patrol car. All northbound and southbound lanes were closed as a precaution due to the ammunition stored in the patrol car. As soon as the fire was extinguished, 3 northbound lanes and 2 southbound lanes were reopened.

The Trooper, subject in custody, and the driver of the Lincoln Town Car, were all transported to Overlake Hospital. Originally, the Trooper was transported as a precautionary measure; however, upon examination it was determined the Trooper sustained a serious injury. The Trooper was released from the hospital on Aug 9 and is expected to make a full recovery. The subject in custody was treated and released. The driver of the Lincoln Town Car was treated, released and booked into the King County Jail at 2135 on Aug 9, for Vehicular Assault. Impairment is suspected as a factor in this collision.

The 32 year old Trooper was hired by the Washington State Patrol in January 2000 and was commissioned in June 2001. The Trooper is assigned to District 2, King County.

This is the first time a patrol car has caught fire in the trunk area in WSP history. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. It is unknown, at this point, if any of the ammunition went off. This patrol car is in compliance with Ford's fuel tank puncture recall. The recall fix was completed on this patrol car in March 2003.

This is the second collision in King County in the past two weeks where a patrol car was struck while parked on the shoulder. Fortunately, the Troopers' involved in these collisions will recover fully from their injuries. Tragically, other law enforcement officers have not been as lucky. In 2004, more police officers were killed in the line of duty by traffic related collisions than by being shot (National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund statistics). "This is a dangerous, dangerous job," states WSP Chief John Batiste. "Law enforcement personnel all over Washington continually risk their lives to keep our citizens safe. Even the simplest traffic stop or roadside assistance can be dangerous. I ask the public to be attentive while driving to ensure the safety of our officers."

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